

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

Leafy spurge
Euphorbia esula

Other common names: Faitours grass

USDA symbol: EUES
ODA rating: B and T



Introduction: Native to Europe and temperate Asia, leafy spurge currently is found throughout the world with the exception of Australia. It was probably introduced into the United States as a contaminant in imported grain. Since its introduction, the plant has become a serious management problem, particularly for the north and central plains states. All Oregon infestations have come under yearly control and are being mostly held in check.

Distribution: Counties containing significant populations of leafy spurge include Crook, Malheur, Baker, Union and Wallowa counties. Smaller populations can be found along the John Day River downstream also.

Description: Leafy spurge is a deep-rooted perennial ranging in height from 6 inches to 36 inches. Its greenish-yellow inflorescences are borne in an umbel pattern, and it typically blooms from May to October. Each umbel supports seven to 10 groups of tiny, inconspicuous flowers, subtended by four crescent-shaped glands and two conspicuous greenish-yellow bracts. The bluish-green leaves of leafy spurge are usually alternate except for those located immediately under the inflorescence. These are in a whorled arrangement. Another characteristic is the two kinds of leaves present on the stem. Leafy spurge has milky white sap that will flow from any part of the plant following injury. This sap may cause severe irritation to human skin and is reported to cause blistering and hair loss on the legs of horses in heavily infested pastures. (courtesy Missouri Department of Conservation)

Impacts: Leafy spurge competes strongly in pastures and healthy rangelands reducing more desirable forage. It can become a contaminant in hay also.

Biological controls: Two root beetles and a stem-mining beetle, are well established in eastern Oregon.

